

Washington.

GARRY WILLS had an article in *The Sun*, November 1, entitled, "The CIA and the Press." In it he critiqued a speech I had given a few days before at the National Press Club. It would appear that Mr. Wills wrote from a second-hand report.

The basic issue is a comparison between the desire of the press to

By Stansfield Turner

preserve the secrecy of its sources of information and the desire of the CIA to do the same. Mr. Wills states quite blatantly that the CIA wants not only to protect its sources but to hide its wrongdoings. I vehemently deny this, but more importantly I refer Mr. Wills to the portion of my speech on oversight.

I clearly pointed out that no matter what motives you impute to myself and others in the leadership of the Central Intelligence Agency, we are today under very rigorous oversight from both the executive and legislative branches of our government. Mr. Wills and any citizen have good assurance from the oversight process that secrecy will not be abused.

It Looks As If Mr. Wills Wrote from Second Hand

Next, Mr. Wills expressly says that I said "... reporters should not print the leaks of wrongdoing in government by whistleblowers." I said nothing of the sort and refer you to my text. I only said that we should be suspect of whistleblowers who don't resort to the established oversight procedures before disclosing government secrets to the press and that the members of the press might do well to be skeptical themselves of many whistleblowers. I have in many public speeches affirmed my conviction that a number of whistleblowers in recent years have provided a great service to our country.

In his final paragraph, Mr. Wills states the thesis that protecting sources so that ultimately newsmen will be able to publish more facts is necessarily and always laudable; whereas protecting sources so as not to reveal government secrets is always necessarily bad. This simplistic thesis has no logic to support it, nor would the people of this country support the view that protecting such information as our nation's communication codes, our negotiating positions in matters of trade, tariffs or arms limitation, or any number of other national concerns may not be equally or more important to our national well-being.

I close with the suggestion and hope that should Mr. Wills have any evidence or suspicion of cover-up, wrongdoing or impropriety by me or anyone in the intelligence community, that he make those suspicions known to the Intelligence Oversight Board, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. I can assure him that all three bodies will thoroughly investigate any such information he wishes to make available.

Mr. Turner is director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Can the CIA Director Read?

I PRESUME Admiral Turner is able to read. Does he refrain from doing so on principle, or just from the press of business? Far from saying that protection of news sources "is

By Garry Wills

necessarily and always laudable," I repeated in my column what I have often said in print, that I think the *New York Times's* refusal [*in the case of reporter Myron Farber*] to release possible evidence in a murder trial is not necessarily laudable.

Admiral Turner says whistleblowers should be treated warily by the

press (they have been), and that internal correction should first be looked to (it normally is). Whistleblowing occurs when the system is not self-correcting. To attack the present wary treatment of whistleblowers is to ask, in effect, that they not be encouraged or their information never be printed. That is the real point of Admiral Turner's "comparison between the desire of the press to preserve the secrecy of its sources of information and the desire of the CIA to do the same"—since the *Times* said it would not release its sources at all.

I said that protection of sources should be judged very differently in a process whose aim is eventual publication of facts (as the press's must

be) and one whose aim is maintenance of secrets (as the CIA's must be). Comparing the two situations is like saying the man who refuses information to a murderer is the same as the man who refuses information to a rescuer—they are both just refusing information.

Admiral Turner refers to the text of his speech; but it was in the question period that he said he could see "no difference" in the cases of the *Times* protecting sources and the CIA protecting secrets. I presume Admiral Turner is able to see. Does he refrain from doing so on principle, or just from the press of business?

Mr. Wills, who teaches at the Johns Hopkins University, writes a syndicated column.